



U.S. Immigration  
and Customs  
Enforcement

September 29, 2005

# News Release

## **SMUGGLING RING OPERATOR FOUND GUILTY OF RUNNING ILLEGAL EMPLOYMENT AGENCY**

*Conviction is the seventh in ongoing criminal prosecution of conspiracy*

FARGO, N.D. — As a result of an investigation conducted by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) special agents, a Texas man and his employment agency were found guilty Thursday by a 12-person jury of conspiracy to transport illegal aliens and money laundering.

Evidence presented during the trial showed that during the five-year conspiracy, Yu Wei Shan, 51, and his company, Great Texas Employment Agency, transported approximately 6,000 illegal alien workers to Asian restaurants throughout the Midwest, including over 40 requests for workers for Asian restaurants in North Dakota. Illegal alien workers were also delivered to restaurants in South Dakota, Minnesota, Michigan, Wisconsin, Ohio, and other states.

The investigation began in August 2004 when border patrol agents with U.S. Customs and Border Protection apprehended two illegal aliens near Grand Forks. The two revealed that they had been working at the Buffet House restaurant on Gateway Dr. in Grand Forks, but left because the owners required them to work long hours seven days a week for very little pay.

ICE special agents began an investigation, which resulted in search warrants being served on the restaurant and at a nearby apartment in early September 2004. Agents arrested five illegal aliens and both restaurant owners, Yun Di Lu and Hong Peng, both of whom later pleaded guilty to harboring illegal aliens. The investigation eventually led ICE special agents to the Great Texas Employment Agency, located in McKinney, Texas.

“This case began with a routine arrest of two illegal aliens and resulted in an entire smuggling ring being pulled up by its roots,” said Michael Mach, resident agent in charge of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) office in Grand Forks. “I am very proud of our agents and the top-notch investigation they conducted.”

Following Thursday's conviction, the U.S. Attorney's Office also stipulated that Shan will forfeit the contents of several bank accounts and a \$100,000 money judgment, which includes his interest in a home near Dallas, Texas.

"The evidence in this case showed that Mr. Shan was someone who supplied and exploited thousands of illegal workers," said Assistant U. S. Attorney Nick Chase, who prosecuted the case. "The workers were just cargo to him and he made a lot of money in the process. The agents with U.S. Border Patrol and Immigration and Customs Enforcement really did an outstanding job shining a light on Mr. Shan's smuggling operation."

Six additional co-defendants have pleaded guilty to the conspiracy, and a seventh co-defendant is scheduled for trial Nov. 28.

During Yu Wei Shan's trial, prosecutors detailed how illegal alien workers were recruited and delivered to restaurants. Shan, along with other co-conspirators, would present prospective illegal alien workers with contracts showing the monthly salary, as well as expenses owed by the worker. The worker would have to reimburse to the employer after receiving the first month's salary.

The illegal workers would be transported across state lines and delivered to the restaurant employer. Upon delivery, the restaurant employers would advance money to the driver to pay the finder's fee and transportation costs, with the understanding that that amount would be deducted from the worker's first paycheck. These illegal acts occurred between March 2000 and January 2005, according to court documents.

The charge of conspiracy to transport illegal aliens carries a statutory maximum penalty of 10 years imprisonment, and the charge of money laundering carries a statutory maximum penalty of 20 years imprisonment. Sentencing for Shan has been scheduled for Dec. 9 in U.S. District Court in Fargo.

# ICE #

*U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.*